

Hamilton Field,  
Double Non-Commissioned Officers'  
Quarters Type A  
(Facility Nos. 557, 563)  
San Jose Drive  
Novato  
Marin County  
California

HABS No. CA-2398-BQ

HABS  
CAL  
21-NOVA,  
IBQ-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**

**HAMILTON FIELD**

**Double Non-Commissioned Officers' Quarters, Type A  
(Facility Nos. 557, 563)**

HABS  
CAL  
21-NOVA,  
IBQ-

**HABS No. CA-2398-BQ**

**Location:** Hamilton Army Air Field  
Novato, Marin County, California  
Double Non-Commissioned Officers' Quarters, Type A  
Facility Nos. 557 (170/172 San Jose Drive) and 563 (220/222 San Jose Drive)

U.S.G.S.: Novato, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1954 (revised 1980)  
Petaluma Point, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1959 (revised 1980)  
UTM Coordinates: Zone 10; A: 542100/4213620; B: 544720/4212220;  
C: 542760/4210650; D: 541040/4212600

**Present Owner:** U. S. Navy, Washington, D.C.

**Present Occupant:** Military families

**Present Use:** Residential

**Statement of Significance:**

Type A double Non-Commissioned Officers' (NCO) Quarters are among the original residential units designed at Hamilton Field. The homes were equipped with all modern amenities available at the time they were built and were architecturally unique in the military system. The buildings are significant as an example of the application of an important architectural trend (Spanish Colonial Revival) adapted to reflect California's mission heritage in a dramatic departure from traditional military architecture.

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) for a comprehensive Statement of Significance and individual report HABS No. CA-2398-F for a condensed general Statement of Significance.

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**PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

**A. Physical History:**

1. **Date of Erection:** Construction on Type A NCO Housing was completed July 31, 1933 (Hamilton Facility Cards 1933-1971).
2. **Architect:** Hamilton Field was designed under the guidance of Captain Howard B. Nurse, Construction Quartermaster. He was assisted by a corps of civilians headed by H. P. Spencer, Chief Architect, and F. W. Salfinger, Chief Engineer. Captain F. C. Peters and Lieutenant J. H. Veal of the Quartermaster's Corps were detailed to Marin County by the War Department to assist Nurse (*Novato Advance* May 28, 1932). Landscaping efforts were directed by C. C. Stevens, a local landscape engineer, using plantings chosen by Nurse and donated by Marin County citizens.
3. **Original Owner:** Hamilton Field is on land originally owned by a number of private individuals and companies. In 1930 the California Packing Company sold 630 acres of land to Marin County to use to entice the Army to build on the site. An additional 161 acres were purchased from Dr. T. Peter and Julia Bodkin. These parcels were combined with other County-owned land, and in 1932 Marin County sold a 927-acre parcel of land to the Department of the Army for \$1.00 for use by the Army Air Corps as an air field. In 1947 Hamilton Air Field was transferred to the newly-formed U. S. Air Force and renamed Hamilton Air Force Base. In 1974 the U. S. Congress declared the installation excess to military needs and closed the base (Maniery et al. 1993). The permanent housing area was transferred to the U. S. Navy in 1974 and remains in Navy ownership in 1995.
4. **Builder, Contractor, Supplier:** Construction of the double NCO Quarters was let in three contracts. Robert E. McKee Company (Los Angeles) received a contract to build five of the duplexes in September 18, 1932. Frank J. Reilley of Sacramento was awarded a contract to construct 12 duplexes on January 21, 1933 for \$65,331 and a second contract to build 18 more of the duplexes on November 3, 1933. This second contract was let for a total of \$242,557. Lewis Lambretti of Mill Valley put in all sidewalks and driveways in the housing area beginning in November, 1933 (Maniery et al. 1993). Type A units cost \$14,154.36 each (Hamilton Facility Cards 1933-1971).
5. **Original Plans and Construction:** Original plans for all permanent housing were drawn on linen with black ink by Nurse's corps of architects. The originals have not been located, but copies of these plans for all permanent housing (elevations, electrical, plumbing, floor plans) are filed at the National Archives, Pacific Division in San Bruno, California. Original ink plans prepared for driveway and sidewalk paving and depicting site plans of the housing areas are filed at the National Archives. Facility cards for the

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permanent housing, including an original photograph taken at completion of construction and floor plans, are on file at the Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, in Novato, California. Early views of the permanent housing area under construction and at completion of work are contained in the Walt Lyons scrapbook at the Marin County Library, History Room, San Rafael, California.

6. **Alterations/Additions:** Most of the original steel sash or casement windows have been replaced with multi-light aluminum windows. Kitchens were remodeled in 1955 and original cabinets, appliances, hardware, flooring, and lighting were replaced. In 1962 the tile countertops and backsplashes in the kitchen were removed and replaced with post-formed plastic laminate. Kitchen floor coverings were replaced with vinyl asbestos tiles. A recessed light fixture was added over the sink at this time. Some interior fixtures have been removed and replaced with modern fixtures, and some garage doors have been replaced.

**B. Historical Context:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) and Section B in report HABS No. CA-2398-F.

**PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

**A. General Statement:**

1. **Architectural Character:** The permanent housing area at Hamilton Field was planned around the existing topography to complement the architectural style chosen for the base. Nurse and his team of architects designed reinforced concrete buildings covered with white stucco and red tile roofs and other features such as arcades and ornamental door surrounds in a basic Spanish Colonial Revival style. This style was used by Captain Nurse at Randolph Field in Texas and by other Army architects at various bases (Fine and Remington 1972:48; Thomason and Associates 1993). Captain Nurse blended the standard Colonial Revival design with elements borrowed from Moorish, Spanish Churrigueresque, Mission, and Art Moderne styles, creating a unique Spanish Eclectic look.

All permanent housing is of hollow tile and stucco construction and has Mission tile roofs and reinforced concrete foundations. Steel bars were used during construction in consideration of the seismic activity of the region. Houses are all equip with laundry and storage basements, attached garages, built-in closets and cabinets, and tiled bathrooms.

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2. Condition of fabric: The condition of the permanent Army housing is excellent. The U. S. Navy has maintained the exteriors and interiors of the structures since taken over ownership in the mid 1970s. Navy crews have regularly made repairs, painted as necessary, and conducted routine maintenance.

**B. Description of Exterior:**

1. Overall dimensions: The Non-Commissioned Officers' Quarters Type A have two-story U-shaped masses with small projecting porches on either side. The front elevations feature recessed porches on either corner of the lower story with cantilevered balconies on the central upper story. The buildings measure 58 feet long by 38 feet deep. All have partially below grade basements.

2. Foundation: Foundations are reinforced concrete and measure two feet thick at the base and one foot thick above the basement floor.

3. Walls: The exterior walls are 12-inch hollow tile bricks. The tile bricks are coated with cementitious stucco rendered with a smooth face. Exterior detailing consists of porch entrances with two square columns and two pilasters, and projecting cast concrete window sills.

4. Structural systems, framing: Structural support is provided by hollow tile brick walls with wood-framed interior walls. Continuous reinforced concrete tie beams separate each floor. Roof systems consist of terra cotta Mission tile laid on wood rafters.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The primary entrance to each unit is accessed through a columned recessed porch on the front elevation. Each porch has two columns on the front and an opening on each side. A decorative wrought iron balustrade is located on the side. Concrete steps lead to the porches. Cantilevered wooden "Monterey" style balconies with terra cotta tile shed roofs supported by four turned posts with turned railings are located on the front elevations immediately above the entryways. Small cantilevered wrought iron balconies with railings with turned and square posts are located on the central front upper facade. Concrete porches with exterior stairways provide access to the interior staircases on each side elevation; they have turned wooden posts and Mission-style brackets supporting Mission tile shed roofs. The railings are wrought iron and stuccoed concrete.

6. Chimneys: An exterior rectangular stucco-covered chimney is located on the central rear facade of each building. Cast iron cleanout doors and frames are at the chimney base.

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**7. Openings:**

a. **Doorways/doors:** Primary entrance doors are located on each porch; secondary doors are at the side elevations of each unit, and balcony doors are present on the upper center facade. The primary entrance is through a wooden door, consisting of vertical boards with inverted arches at each upper corner; each has a hinged leaded glass peep window covered by a wrought iron grille in its upper portion. Secondary exterior doors are solid core wood with one light over three recessed panels. Balcony doors have a fixed transom light over multi-pane glass French doors. Doors on the basement level have six lights over a panel. Garage doors are overhead segmented type with one row of lights above two rows of four recessed panels; these replaced the original wood doors.

b. **Windows/shutters:** The original exterior windows, of multi-pane metal casement sash, have been replaced with modern metal frame multi-light sash. Original metal casement windows are extant between the upstairs bedrooms and sleeping porches.

**8. Roof:**

a. **Shape/covering:** The buildings have end-gable low-pitched roofs covered with terra cotta Mission tiles with copper gutters, and metal downspouts and scuppers. A cast concrete splash block is located under each downspout. The roofs have Mission tile ridgelines.

b. **Cornice/eaves:** Eaves on the gable end walls consist of a single row of Mission tiles.

**C. Description of Interior:**

1. **Floor Plans:** The NCO housing units are duplex units, with mirrored floor plans on each story. Units are described individually below.

a. **Basement:** The basements are accessed by exterior garage doors and by stairways from the first floor hall. Each floor plan is divided into a garage, laundry room, storage room, and boiler room. An unexcavated crawl space is present under the front porch.

b. **First Floor:** The primary access to the units is through a central hallway from the front porch. The hallway provides access to the living room. A dining room is located adjacent to the living room and a kitchen projects beyond the rectangular mass of the building.

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- c. **Second Floor:** Each unit has three bedrooms, an enclosed sleeping porch, and bath surrounding a central hall and a stairway which provides access from the first floor. The sleeping porch and one bedroom are located in the front of the unit, with the other bedrooms and bath to the rear.
2. **Stairways:** The NCO housing units are served by an interior stairway from the first floor hallway to the second story and another from the kitchen to the basement. The primary staircase consists of oak stairs with turned wood posts, some painted, and an oak hand rail. The newel post is square with chamfered corners. There is also a two-inch wood rail on the inside wall. The basement stairway is wood with a non-skid material on the front portion of the tread. There are two-inch round pipe handrails on the interior and exterior staircase walls.
3. **Flooring:** Flooring in all of the main rooms is the original two-inch red oak. Flooring in the kitchens is asphalt tile or vinyl and was added after 1961. The basement and garage have exposed concrete floors; a small area of the basement under the front porch is unexcavated and clad with dirt. Flooring in the bathrooms is one- by one-inch and one- by two-inch ceramic tile laid in a pattern using a variety of two-tone color schemes (e.g., cream and black). The bathrooms have marble thresholds.
4. **Wall/ceiling finish:** All of the rooms, except for the basement, have painted plaster walls and ceilings. The basement walls are painted concrete or tile. Walls in the bathroom are covered with ceramic tile, with a black tile bullnose and baseboard.
5. **Openings:**  
a. **Doorways/doors:** A square arch with chamfered corners provides access to the living room from the entry hall, and a wider archway is located between the living room and dining room. All other doors in the house are solid core wood with two recessed plywood panels. The door between the dining room and kitchen swings both ways and has a metal push plate and kick plate.
6. **Decorative features/trim:** Door casings and baseboards are wood and simple in design. Each of the main rooms has a picture molding cornice. Each unit has a living room fireplace. It is constructed of "cast stone" (concrete) and has decorative pilasters on either side, and a 12-inch red quarry tile floor and hearth. In the bathrooms, the original ceramic toothbrush and glass holders, soap dishes, toilet paper holder, and black plastic-covered wood towel racks are extant, as is the mirrored metal medicine cabinet above the sink.
7. **Hardware:** The exterior door has a standard brass thumb latch lock. Interior door hardware consists of a nickel-plated decorative circular knob and escutcheon made by

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the Corbin Company. Exterior doors are supported by hammered metal strap hinges, interior doors have standard half-mortise hinges. The original electric plates are plastic and extant in many of the units.

**8. Mechanical equipment:**

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Steam radiators made by American Radiator or Crane Radiator companies are located in each room and provide heating. Steam is generated by cast iron boilers located in the basements. The boilers are made by the Ideal Gas Boiler Company or Bryant Tubular Gas Boiler Company.

b. Kitchen Appliances: No original kitchen appliances were noted.

c. Ventilation: Ventilation for the attics is through three round Mission tile vents on the rear facade gable ends and Mission tile vents on the front gable facade; for the basements through decorative cast concrete grilles.

d. Lighting: All duplexes have knob and tube wiring with circuit breaker boxes. The original lighting in the first floor hallway consisted of a hall pendant "Monterey Style" twisted wrought iron fixture with one candle light. The fixture in the dining room was "Monterey Style" of twisted wrought iron with three candle-style lights. The living room fixture was in the same style, but with five lights. Wrought iron wall sconces with individual candle-style lights were located on all four dining room walls. Original bedroom lights were surface-mounted double canopies with candle lights. The light fixture in the upper hallway was a wrought iron canopy with six points. Many of the lights have been replaced with modern fixtures. Original bathroom lights consist of ceramic wall sconces, flanking the medicine cabinet, and operated by pull chains.

e. Plumbing: Each basement has an "Alberene Stone" double sink. The bathroom, located on the second floor, has a "Crane" flush valve toilet, "RVB" wall-mounted sink, and enameled cast iron tub.

**9. Original Furnishings:** A wooden shelf supported by a bracket provided telephone storage in the lower floor hallway. There is a built-in bookcase in each living room, and a china cabinet in the dining room. The china cabinet has two sets of panelled doors, two drawers, and a recessed niche. Built-in pull-down ironing boards, with two recessed wood-panelled doors, are located in the kitchens. The kitchen cabinets are wood, with Mission-style hammered copper hinges and latches and were added in 1955 when the kitchen was remodeled. A small cabinet is located in the pantry.



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**D. Site:**

1. **General site orientation:** The primary facades of the NCO Type A housing units face northerly. Located in the original Spanish Colonial Revival district of Hamilton Army Air Field on the slope of a rolling hill, they are surrounded by other NCO duplex housing units with the same mass and design.

2. **Historic landscape design:** Captain Nurse's overall plan for base design included thoughtful use of rock walls, terracing, and plantings to create a visual effect that was continued, in a more limited fashion, during World War II. Rock terracing throughout the original base served to simultaneously separate individual residences while visually uniting various sections of the base into an overall city-like plan. They were built as part of the final phase of original post construction in 1935 (Hamilton Official Photographs 1934-1935). Foundation and accent plantings, tree-lined streets, and retention of natural oak groves and rolling hills complement the rock work.

In the housing areas the homes sit in well-landscaped grounds with lawns, mature oak and palm trees, shrubs, and flowers. Upright accent trees frame the doors and corners of many buildings. There are no fences; each yard flows into the next and the plantings, stone retaining walls, street light standards, and curved roads lined with palms and other trees provide a cohesive feel to the area. Concrete sidewalks provide separation from the curving streets and connect the houses. The diversity, density, and uniqueness of landscape plantings increased according to military rank of individuals living in the houses; thus landscaping in the NCO area is primarily functional, while that of the base commander is dense and heavily wooded, providing more privacy.

Landscaping in the NCO area include barrier, foundation, accent, and street plantings. Barrier plantings create an illusory separation between houses in lieu of fences. Nurse used blackwood acacia, Modesto ash, Canary Island pine, and Lombardy poplar for barrier plantings. An occasional plant of Oriental arborvitae and Italian cypress was also used, but these are not ideally suited for this purpose and occur sporadically.

Foundation plantings were originally designed to hide foundations and tend to soften the transition between the ground and the buildings. These are fundamental design plants and a wide variety were used for this purpose, including Japanese boxwoods, California privet, myrtle, little-leafed myrtle, mock orange, laurel cherry, red clusterberry, and shiny-leaf privet. During the primary occupation at Hamilton these shrubs were kept pruned and boxed-shaped, reflecting the preferred look of the day. Most of these plantings in the NCO area have become quite large and overgrown and now appear as accent plants.

Accent plants serve to set off entranceways, driveway corners, highlight a building front, or provide individuality. Nurse planned these plants as upright accents to contrast

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with the foundation plantings. In the NCO area a limited number of species were used for this purpose, primarily New Zealand dracaena, Italian cypress, and Oriental arborvitae. Some streets in the NCO areas were also planted with trees, primarily sycamore or London planetree and Modesto ash. Very few trees are present along Crescent Drive, but San Jose Drive is heavily planted with London planetrees.

### **PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

**A. Architectural Drawings:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

**B. Historic Maps and Views:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

**C. Interviews:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

**D. Bibliography:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

Sources cited in this individual report are listed below.

Fine, Jesse, and Lenore Remington

1972 *Army Corps of Engineers: Construction in the U.S.* U.S. Army and World War II, Office of Military History.

Hamilton Facility Cards

1933-1971 Maintenance Cards for Base Facilities. On file, Hamilton Army Air Field Installation Office, Novato, and Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

Maniery, Mary L., Leslie R. Fryman, and Fred Hrusa

1993 *National Register of Historic Places Evaluation, Hamilton Army Air Field Historic District, Marin County, California.* Submitted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District.

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Thomason and Associates

1993 *Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas*. Cultural Resource Survey, Final Report. Nashville, Tennessee. On file, State Office of Historic Preservation, Austin, Texas.

**E.    Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

**F.    Supplemental Material:**

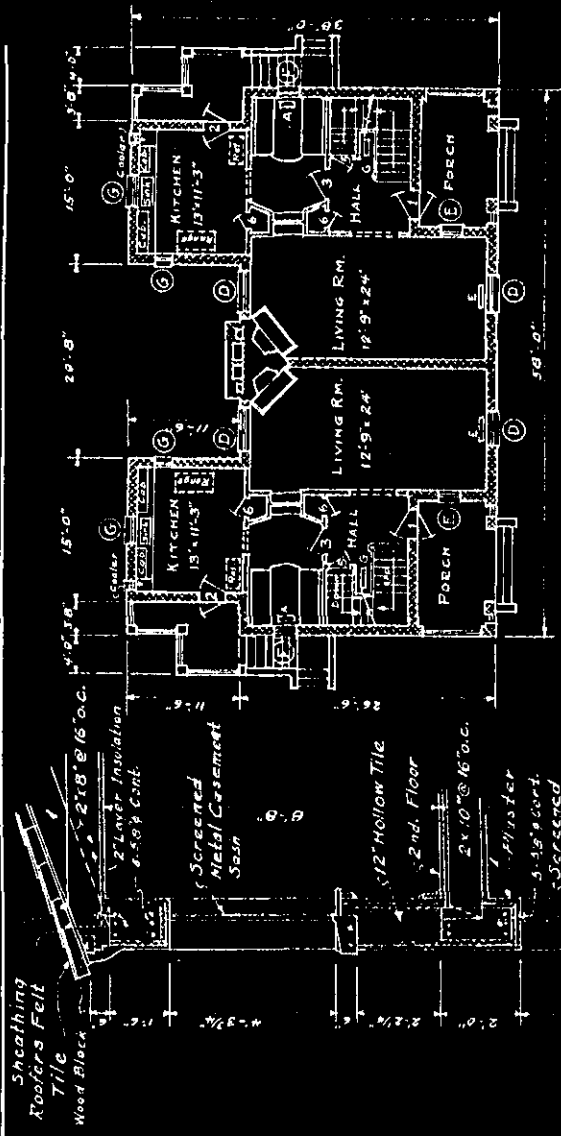
Copies of representative floor plans of Facility Nos. 557, 563, dated in the 1930s and prepared by the Quartermaster's General Office are attached to this form.

**PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

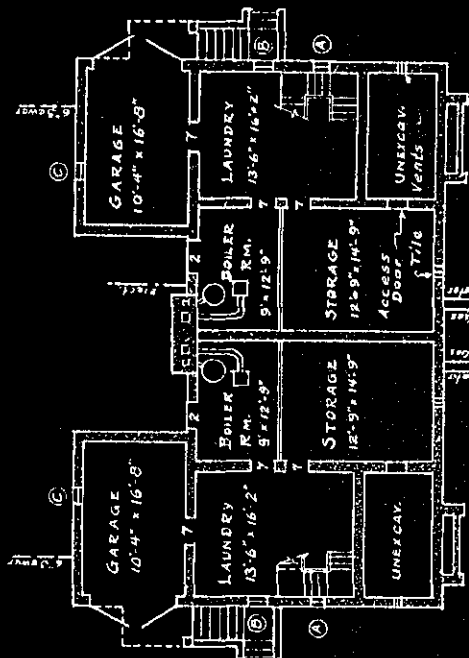
Hamilton Army Air Field is owned by various federal entities including the Department of the Navy, Department of the Army, United States Coast Guard, and General Services Administration. The Army/GSA parcels are being excessed and sold to private developers. The Navy property is included in Base Closure and Realignment actions.

As part of the Army's undertaking, it has been determined in consultation with the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) that the excess sale will have an affect on properties at the air field, and that these properties are components of a district that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Based on consultation with the OHP and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 CFR part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into by the interested parties in March 1994. The agreement stipulated that prior to excess sale the Army must contact the HABS/HAER division at the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California, to determine the appropriate level and kind of recordation for the subject properties. The MOA further stipulated that copies of the documentation be made available to the OHP and appropriate local archives designated by the OHP. This recordation has been prepared in order to meet those stipulations.

The title page, Part I, and Part III were prepared by Mary L. Maniery, Historian, PAR Environmental Services, Sacramento. Architectural descriptions in Part II were compiled by Judith Marvin, Historian/Architectural Historian, Foothill Resources, Murphys, California. Descriptions were checked against photographs and plans by Mary L. Maniery and were embellished and corrected, as necessary. Information on historic landscape design was extracted by Mary L. Maniery from a report prepared by Dr. Fred Hrusa, Botanist, PAR Environmental Services. Photography was prepared by David DeVries, Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



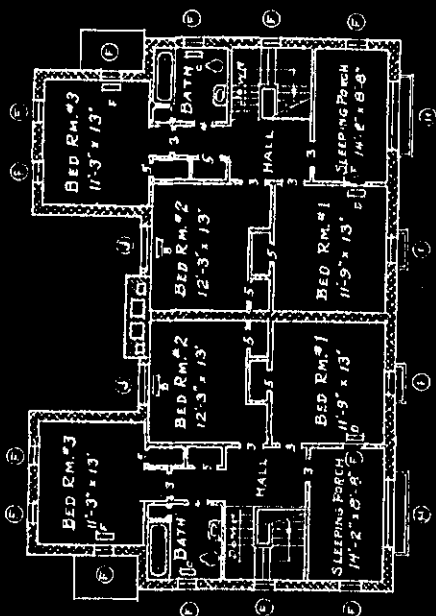
BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN

Scale 1/4" = 1'-0"

Scale 1/4" = 1'-0"

TYPICAL WALL SECTION

Scale 1/4" = 1'-0"



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

LIST OF OPENINGS		
NO.	WIDTH	HEIGHT
1	7'-7 1/2"	2'-3 1/4"
2	2'-2 1/4"	2'-3 1/4"
3	2'-2 1/4"	2'-3 1/4"
4	4'-7 1/2"	6'-4"
5	3'-1 1/2"	5'-4"
6	3'-1 1/2"	4'-4 3/4"
7	3'-1 1/2"	3'-3 1/4"
8	7'-0"	6'-6"
9	3'-9"	6'-6"
10	4'-7 1/2"	4'-3 3/4"
DOORS		
1	3'-0"	7'-0"
2	2'-8"	6'-8"
3	2'-8"	6'-8"
4	2'-6"	6'-8"
5	2'-4"	6'-8"
6	2'-0"	6'-8"
7	2'-8"	6'-8"

RADIATORS		
Symbol	Description	Size
A	3 Tube 26" High	14
B	"	18 1/2
C	"	21
D	"	28
E	"	37 1/2
F	"	39 1/2
G	"	40 1/2

CAST IRON HEATING BOILER		
Fuel	Gas	
Capacity	not less than	
365 Sq. Ft. H. R. Radiation	Each Half	

40°F Zone  
 Total Cast Iron Hot Water  
 Radiation = 204 1/2 Sq. Ft. (Each Half)

WAR DEPARTMENT  
 OFFICE CONSTRUCTING QUARTERMASTER  
 HAMILTON FIELD, CALIF.

DOUBLE N.C.O. QUARTERS TYPE "A"

Drawn H.S.H.  
 Traced B.E.E.  
 Checked B.E.E.  
 Date 3-1933

H.S.H.  
 H.S.H.  
 Capt. G.M. Corps  
 Constructing Quartermaster

Q.M.G. Plan  
 No. 25-2522  
 Post Plan  
 No. 375-4-33  
 Rtg. No. 317